

# Railroad Whistle Post

## Senate Bill No. 115



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## Whistle Post –Senate Bill 115

The Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen in Michigan support Senate Bill 115, a Safety Bill to amend the 1993 Michigan railroad code by adding sec. 318 regarding placing/retaining a Whistle Post sign before every public grade crossing.

This is a basic Safety Bill to give Locomotive Engineers a consistent timeframe to give a warning to all citizens, whether in a vehicle or walking, that a train is coming.

It is very important for public safety that a horn warning be given before a train reaches a public crossing. A Whistle Post requirement would be one more enabler to warn the Engineers that they are approaching a Public Crossing. That is why we are asking for Senate Bill 115.

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- Safety Bill to amend the 1993 railroad code by adding sec. 318 regarding placing a Whistle Post before every grade crossing.
- Additional notification for the Engineer that there is a public crossing ahead and that the horn should be blown in warning.
- A Whistle Post is a small reflective diamond shaped sign with a “W” on it which acts as a safety mechanism in any type of weather.
- Locomotive Engineers, even if they have not been over a portion of track in one year, rely on a Whistle Post to be placed before every public crossing. Only one trip per year is required to maintain track qualification under FRA rules.
- A Whistle Post is a consistent warning device for the Engineer to blow the horn for those crossings that do not have automatic warning systems. The train horn warns the public that a train is coming.

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- There is currently no Federal law requiring the placement of these signs or maintaining the ones that already exist.
- In the final draft of the Federal horn/whistle law of 2005 the requirement for having and maintaining Whistle Posts was removed.
- When the Whistle Post requirement was removed, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) stated in ..68 FR 70603 – 70666 sec. 222.21 of the 2005 FR that they the “FRA encourages railroads to retain present whistle boards as an aid to their locomotive engineers”.
- The carriers are becoming more resistant to replacing and maintaining the signs that we report as missing or severely damaged.
- Under the 2005 Federal Railroad Safety Act, any State has the right to adopt or continue to enforce a stricter law or standard related to railroad safety.
- Many States have enacted additional legislation concerning the requirement for having and maintaining Whistle Posts since the 2005 Federal Horn Law update (California, Oregon, Montana, Arizona, Florida, Indiana, for example).

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- There are 5,365 public crossings State wide. Most of these have Whistle Post signs already in place.
- The cost of this law would be zero to the State and since most of the signs are already in place, it would be a minimal cost to the railroads to put up any missing signs and to maintain them.
- It is one more enabler to help save lives by ensuring that a Whistle Post sign is always placed before every crossing as one more indicator for the Engineer that a public crossing is ahead and that the Engineer should be prepared to blow the horn.
- Numerous States have already enacted Whistle Post laws to supplement Federal requirements.
- The Federal Rail Safety Act allows the States to impose stricter regulations regarding safety issues.

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The next few pages will illustrate what a Whistle Post sign is and what it looks like on the approach of a train in inclement weather.

As you can see, the Whistle Post becomes the last warning that the Engineer will get when approaching a public crossing.

This consistent warning is why we feel that this Legislation should be added to the Michigan Railroad Code of 1993, sec.318.









